GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3204
ANSWERED ON:21.03.2007
VISIT OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of visits made by foreign dignitaries to India during the last three months, till date;

(b) the issues on which deliberations were held with each one of them;

(c) whether any bilateral agreements were signed with them;

(d) is so, the details thereof;

(e) the details of visits undertaken by the Prime Minister as well as External Affairs Minister during the above period;

(f) the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof; and

(g) the steps taken by the Government to further improve the relations with these countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA)

(a)-(d) During the last three months till date, 13 Foreign Heads of State/Government, 2 Vice Presidents, 7 Deputy Prime Ministers, 19 Foreign Ministers and other dignitaries visited India. Details of issues discussed with them and bilateral agreements signed are given in Annexure I.

(e)-(f) During the same period, Prime Minister visited two countries viz. Japan and Philippines, and EAM visited ten countries viz. Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Iran, and Philippines. Details of discussions and outcome of these visits are given in Annexure II.

(g) The Government are engaged with these countries through high-level visits and other initiatives to further expand our relations with them.

ANNEXURE-I REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (D) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3204 REGARDING 'VISIT OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES' FOR ANSWER ON 21.03.2007

African Union

1. Prof. Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the Africa Union paid an official visit to India from December 19-21, 2006. During the visit, he called on the President and EAM. During his meeting with External Affairs Minister (EAM) & Minister of State (MOS) for External Affairs (AS), Prof. Konare conveyed the desire of the AU to expand Africa's relations with India and proposed an AU-India Summit. The need for a high level political dialogue with a Group of 12 African Heads of State/Government was discussed and to realize this objective, it was felt that a Working Group be set up to draw up an Agenda and ensure follow up action. EAM conveyed India's desire to cooperate further with the AU and assist it in realizing its vision of Africa unitedly building Africa. The two sides also discussed historical and cultural ties between India and Africa, the importance of democratic values, and implementation of the Pan Africa e-network.

Armenia

2. A Parliamentary delegation from Armenia, led by H.E. Mr. Tigran Torosyan, President of the Armenian National Assembly, visited India from December 13-17, 2006. The delegation held meetings with the Vice President, Speaker (Lok Sabha), EAM, Leader of the Opposition and Members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs to discuss bilateral relations and parliamentary exchanges between the two countries.

Austria

3. Dr. Ursula Plassnik, Federal Minister for EU and International Affairs of Austria paid an official visit to India from March 15-18, 2007. During the visit, the Austrian Minister called on PM and met EAM, Ministers of Science & Technology and Social Justice &

Empowerment. The two sides discussed bilateral relations, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

Belarus

4. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Mr. Sergei Martynov visited India on February 22-23, 2007. He met EAM, Minister of Commerce and Industry and MOS for External Affairs to discuss further strengthening of the India-Belarus relations and forthcoming visit of the President of Belarus to India.

Bhutan

5. The Prime Minister of Bhutan H.E. Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuck, and Foreign Minister of Bhutan visited India from January 28-February 1, 2007 to participate in the 'Conference on Peace, Non-Violence and Empowerment' (Satyagraha Conference) held in Delhi from January 29-30, 2007.

6. His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan, paid an official visit to India from February 7-12, 2007. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan accompanied His Majesty the King. During the visit, both sides exchanged views on bilateral, regional and international issues. The Government of India reaffirmed its full support to Bhutan during its period of transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy, including for the forthcoming elections. India reiterated its commitment to provide all possible assistance within its resources, to the Royal Government of Bhutan in its socio-economic development programme, including the on-going Ninth Five Year Plan and the forthcoming Tenth Five Year Plan. The updated India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty was signed on February 08, 2007 in New Delhi.

Botswana

7. The President of the Republic of Botswana, H.E. Mr. Festus G. Mogae, paid a State visit to India from December 7-13, 2006. The two countries discussed cooperation in health and education sectors, setting up of a science and technology institute in Botswana, mining including exploration for diamonds in Botswana, rural development and international & regional issues. PM offered Botswana a line of credit of US$20m and grant assistance of $ 11m. Botswana President committed support to India on the India − SACU PTA, India − SADC Forum and Permanent Membership in the UN Security Council. The following Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit:

(a) Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.

(b) General Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation.

(c) Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2007-2010.

(d) Country Agreement with the Government of Botswana for Pan-African e-Network.

China

8. Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Foreign Minister of China visited India from February 11-14, 2007. The visit provided an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the understandings reached during the visit of the Chinese President to India in November 2006. He also attended the Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of India, China and Russia.

Egypt

9. The Egyptian Foreign Minister Mr. Aboul Gheit visited India from December 15-16, 2006 to co-Chair the 5th Session of India-Egypt Joint Commission meeting in New Delhi. He had detailed talks with EAM on various bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The 5th session of the India-Egypt Joint Commission, co-chaired by EAM and the Egyptian Foreign Minister, was held on December 16. The Joint Commission discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in economic, commercial, science and technology, agriculture, IT, and cultural fields. Following Agreements/Documents were signed during the visit:

(a) the Partnership Agreement.

(b) the Executive Programme of Cultural, Educational and Scientific Cooperation for theyears 2007-2009.

(c) the Executive Programme of Science and Technological Cooperation for the years 2007-2009.

(d) the Work Plan under the Agreement on Cooperation on Agriculture for the years 2007-2008.

(e) Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Air Services.

El Salvador

10. Mr. Francisco Lainez, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of El Salvador visited India from March 4-9, 2007. The two sides discussed bilateral issues and agreed to promote cooperation in a variety of areas and including multilateral fora.

European Union

11. Dr (Ms) Benita Ferrero Waldner, EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy visited India from

February 16-20, 2007. India-EU, regional and global issues were discussed.

Fiji

12. Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Fiji paid an official visit to India from March 3-6, 2007. During the visit, he had meetings with EAM and Minister of Tourism and Culture. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and international issues of common interest.

Finland

13. H.E. Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland visited Delhi from January 20-24, 2007 in connection with the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit from January 22-24, 2007 organized by TERI. She was accompanied by Minister of Trade & Industry Mauri Pekkarinen and a business delegation. The Finnish President met with President, PM, and Chairperson, UPA. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed. This was a private visit.

France

14. Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy, Foreign Minister of France visited India from November 30-December 1, 2006. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

Iceland

15. H.E. Dr. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, President of Iceland, visited India from January 20-25, 2007 in connection with the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit from January 22-24, 2007 organized by TERI. He had meetings with President, PM, Chairperson, UPA, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas Shri Murli Deora, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports and Panchayati Raj Shri Mani Shanker Iyer, and Minister of Civil Aviation Shri Praful Patel. Bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed. This was a private visit.

Indonesia

16. Mr. Jusuf Kalla, Vice President of Indonesia, visited India from January 28-31, 2007 for participation in the Satyagraha Conference. During his visit, the Indonesian Vice President called on the Prime Minister and Vice President. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

Italy

17. H.E. Dr Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of Italy, accompanied by Minister for International Trade and European Affairs, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Family Policies visited India from February 10-15, 2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed. Following documents were signed during the visit:

(a) Memorandum of Understanding on setting up a Joint Working Group on Combating International Terrorism & Trans-National Crime.

(b) Memorandum of Understanding on Renewable Energy Cooperation.

(c) Cultural Exchange Programme 2007-09.

18. Mr. Francesco Rutelli, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Welfare and Cultural Activities visited India from January 27-31, 2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

Jordan

19. H.M. King Abdullah-II Bin Al Hussein and H.M. Queen Rania Al-Abdullah accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Talal Bin Mohammed, Minister of Industry and Trade Salem Khazaale, Minister of Information & Communication Technology Bassem Roussan and other senior officials including a business delegation visited India from November 30-December 2, 2006. During the visit, the King held discussions with President and Prime Minister on the bilateral relations and the regional situation. Chairperson of UPA, and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha called on the King. Following Agreements/Documents were signed:

(a) Cooperation in Agriculture.

(b) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection.

(c) Cooperation in Tourism.

(d) Culture Exchange Programme.

20. As a result of bilateral talks, M/s IFFCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Jordan Phosphate Mines Co. Ltd. (JPMC) on January 31, 2007 to set up a state of art phosphoric acid plant with a capacity of 1500MT P205 per day. IFFCO and its associates will hold 52% equity and JPMC and its associates will hold the remaining 48% in the joint venture.

Luxembourg

21. Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Immigration visited India from February 19-23, 2007. He called on Speaker, Lok Sabha and met EAM, National Security Adviser (NSA) and others. During his meeting with these dignitaries, bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed.

Malaysia

22. Dato' Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia visited India on February 15-16, 2007 in connection with the 4th India-Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi on February 16, 2007. During the visit, the Malaysian Foreign Minister called on PM and met EAM. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

Maldives

23. H.E. Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of Maldives, accompanied by his Foreign Minister, visited India from January 27-February 1, 2007 to lead the Maldivian delegation to participate in the Satyagraha Conference.

24. Dr Ahmad Shaheed, Foreign Minister of Maldives visited India from March 15-18, 2007 at the invitation of the IDSA to deliver the Valedictory Address at the International Seminar on Economic Cooperation for the Security and Development in South Asia. During the visit, he paid a courtesy call on EAM.

Mauritius

25. H.E. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius, visited India from January 28-February 1, 2007 to attend the Satyagraha Conference held in New Delhi.

26. Mr. Madan Dulloo, Foreign Minister of Mauritius visited India to participate in the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) celebrations held in New Delhi from January 7-9, 2007. He chaired the Africa Session at the PBD.

Myanmar

27. General Thura Shwe Mann, Chief of Joint Staff of the Union of Myanmar, visited India from December 4-9, 2006. He met with Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi, Chief of Air Staff, Chief of Army Staff, Raksha Mantri, External Affairs Minister and had an audience with the President. During these meetings, bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Norway

28. The Norwegian Foreign Minister Mr. Jonas Gahr Store paid an official visit to India from December 14-15, 2006 in connection with the Second Session of the Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Norway. Apart from bilateral meeting with EAM, the visiting Foreign Minister also had meetings with Minister of Science & Technology and Minister of Environment and Forests where bilateral relations including political and economic issues were discussed. During the JCM, the following were signed:

(a) An Arrangement between the Government of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on Gainful Occupation for Family Members of a Diplomatic Mission or Consular Posts;

(b) Terms of Reference (TOR) for establishing the Indo-Norwegian Joint Working Group on Environment.

Pakistan

29. The Pakistan Foreign Minister Mr. Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri visited India on February 20-22, 2007 to attend the 5th India- Pak Joint Commission meeting held on February 21. EAM and FM of Pakistan reviewed the progress of eight Technical Level Working Groups formed during the 4th Joint Commission meeting held in Islamabad in October 2005. Eight Working Groups cover areas such as environment, Science & Technology, Tourism, Agriculture, Health, IT& Communication, Education and Information. An agreement on "Reducing the Risk from Accidents relating to Nuclear Weapons" was signed between the two countries on February 21, 2007 in the presence of EAM and FM of Pakistan.

Portugal

30. H.E. Mr. Anibal Cavaco Silva, President of Portugal, accompanied by Minister of Culture, Minister for Economy and Innovation, MOS for Foreign Affairs, and MOS for Science & Technology & Higher Education visited India from January 11-17, 2007. Bilateral, regional and global issues were discussed. Following agreements/ documents were signed during the visit:

(a) Extradition Treaty.

(b) Cultural Exchange Programme 2007-09.

(c) Education Exchange Programme 2007-09.

Russia

31. H.E. Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, President of the Russian Federation, paid an official visit to India from January 25-26, 2007 for the Annual Summit meeting. He was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations. He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Alexander Zhukov, Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Mr. Sergei Ivanov and Foreign Minister Mr. Sergei Lavrov apart from other senior functionaries. During the visit, President Putin met the President, Prime Minister and Chairperson of the UPA. Both

sides discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. During the visit, following documents were signed between the two governments:

(a) Joint Statement on the outcome of the official visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India.

(b) Programme of Cultural Exchanges for the years 2007-09.

(c) Protocol on holding "Year of Russia in India" in the year 2008 and "Year of India in Russia" in the Year 2009.

(d) Memorandum of Intent on development of cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plant units at the Kudankulam site as well as in the construction of Russian design nuclear power plants at new sites in the Republic of India.

(e) Agreement on access of the Indian Party to navigation signals of the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System GLONASS for peaceful purposes.

(f) Agreement on access of the Indian Party to a part of the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System GLONASS Radio Frequency Spectrum.

(g) Agreement on cooperation in the joint satellite project 'YOUTHSAT'.

(h) Protocol on exchange of information between the two customs on the movement of goods and conveyances between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation.

(i) A Joint Statement by President Putin and the Prime Minister on the peaceful uses of atomic energy was also issued.

32. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Alexander Zhukov visited India from December 7-10, 2006. He co-chaired the 12th Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission (IRIGC) on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation on 8th December in Delhi. The two sides discussed ways of enhancing bilateral trade and investment, economic cooperation in areas such as energy, metallurgy, commercialization of new and innovative technologies and links between the financial sectors. A Protocol on the deliberations of the IRIGC was signed at the end of the meeting.

33. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mr Sergei Lavrov visited India on February 14, 2007 for the India-Russia-China Trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting. The three countries discussed trilateral cooperation, current global situation and recent developments on regional and international issues of mutual concern. A Joint Communique was issued at the end of the meeting.

34. The Russian Deputy Prime Minister & Defence Minister, Mr. Sergei Ivanov visited India from January 23-26, 2007. He co-chaired the Sixth Meeting of the India-Russia Inter- Governmental Commission for Military Technical Cooperation (IGC-MTC) and joined the delegation of President Putin to India. During the visit, agreements on the licensed production of RD-33 aero engines in India, Protocol of Intent on joint design, development and production of multi-role transport aircraft, and Protocol on the Sixth Meeting of IGC-MTC were signed between the two sides.

Singapore

35. The Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, Prof. S. Jayakumar, visited India from January 6-8, 2007. He was the Chief Guest at the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2007 celebrations. During his stay, Prof. Jayakumar called on Prime Minister, EAM and Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

36. Mr. George Yeo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Singapore visited India from January 16-23, 2007. During the visit, he called on Prime Minister, EAM, Ministers of Human Resource Development, Finance, Commerce and Industry, and Petroleum and Natural Gas. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

Slovenia

37. H.E. Mr. Janez Drnovsek, President of Slovenia, visited India in connection with the Satyagraha Conference held in New Delhi from January 29-30, 2007. He had meetings with PM, UPA Chairperson, and EAM, wherein he discussed matters of mutual interest

Sweden

38. The Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ms. Maud Olofsson, visited India in connection with the Satyagraha Conference held in New Delhi from January 29-30, 2007. She had meetings with Chairperson, UPA, EAM and Urban Development Minister. She also visited Chennai to receive the Swedish East India ship "Gotheborg" which embarked on two-year voyage repeating epic journeys first made over 250 years ago.

Sri Lanka

39. Sri Lankan Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Wickremanayake visited India on January 28-30, 2007. During the visit, he met PM and EAM. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mr. Rohitha Bogollagama visited India on January 30-31, 2007. During this visit, he called on PM and met EAM. During these meetings, bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Thailand

40. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand visited India from March 5-9, 2007. During the New Delhi part of the visit on March 6, 2007, the Princess called on the Vice President and had a meeting with EAM. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

Vietnam

41. Mr. Pham Gia Khiem, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam visited India from February 25 to March 1, 2007 in connection with the 13th India-Vietnam Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi on February 27, 2007. During the visit, he called on PM and met EAM. Bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed.

ANNEXURE-II REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (E) & (F) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3204 REGARDING 'VISIT OF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES' FOR ANSWER ON 21.03.2007

Visits of Prime Minister

Japan

1. PM visited Japan from December 13-16, 2006 at the invitation of the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The two leaders decided to establish a Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan. Both sides agreed that cooperation in Science and Technology, including in frontier areas of research and development, and the increase in cultural, academic and people-to-people exchanges constitutes an important element of the Strategic and Global Partnership between the two countries. They announced an "India-Japan Special Economic Partnership Initiative" (SEPI) which will promote enhancement of investment from Japan to India and help develop India's infrastructure and manufacturing capacity. They reaffirmed their determination to strengthen cooperation and coordination between India and Japan for comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including the expansion of the UN Security Council. They exchanged views on other global, regional and bilateral issues. The following agreements/documents were signed during the visit:

(a) Joint Statement: Towards India - Japan Strategic and Global Partnership.

(b) Memorandum of Cooperation between Japan Coast Guard and Indian Coast Guard.

(c) Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific Cooperation Programme between Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, and the Japan Science & Technology Agency.

(d) Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Science & Technology between Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India and RIKEN, Japan.

(e) Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Cultural for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Japan Foundation.

(f) Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Government of Japan for Establishment of the "Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor".

(g) Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Government of Japan and Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India for the establishment of the Japan-India Policy Dialogue at the Ministerial level.

(h) Joint Statement on the promotion of India-Japan tourism exchanges.

(i) Joint Ministerial Statement on the launching of a Joint Task Force (JTF) to develop an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)/Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

(CEPA) between India and Japan.

(j) Cooperation Agreement between the Government of India and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

(k) Memorandum of Understanding on the development of Indian Institute of Information Technology for Design and Manufacturing (IIITDM) with Japanese assistance at Jabalpur.

Philippines

2. PM visited Cebu in the Philippines from January 13-15, 2007 to participate in the 5th ASEAN-India Summit and 2nd East Asia Summit (EAS). The deliberations focused on strengthening India's cooperation with the ASEAN countries. The 16-EAS leaders signed a Declaration on the East Asian Energy Security.

Visits of the External Affairs Minister

Afghanistan

3. External Affairs Minister visited Kabul on January 23-24, 2007. He invited President Karzai to the 14th SAARC Summit to be held

in New Delhi in April 2007. During the visit, EAM called on President Hamid Karzai, Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations of the Wolesi Jirga Ustad Rasool Sayyaf and Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta. In the official talks with Dr. Spanta, the entire gamut of bilateral relations was discussed. As part of India`s long- term commitment to the stability, progress and peace in Afghanistan, India announced an additional pledge of US$100 million. With this additional pledge, India's total assistance to Afghanistan's reconstruction has increased to US$ 750 million. An MoU on Capacity Development of Afghanistan was signed with the UNDP and Afghan Government.

4. During the visit, EAM handed over the Polyclinic Block of Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health (IGICH), built with India's assistance. Also, the road adjacent to the IGICH was named as "Indira Gandhi Road" with the unveiling of a plaque by EAM.

Bangladesh

5. EAM visited Bangladesh on February 19, 2007 and extended an invitation to Bangladesh to participate in the 14th SAARC Summit being held in New Delhi. During the visit, he had detailed discussions with President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, the Chief Advisor of Caretaker Government, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, and Foreign Affairs Advisor Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury. The discussions centered on bilateral relations and the forthcoming SAARC Summit. Both sides agreed to take steps to place bilateral relations on an "irreversible higher trajectory".

Bhutan

6. EAM visited Bhutan from December 2-3, 2006 to invite His Majesty the King of Bhutan to the 14th SAARC Summit being held in New Delhi. The visit provided an opportunity to discuss the progress and further possibilities for strengthening of Indo-Bhutan relations. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further deepen and widen relations in all spheres.

Iran

7. EAM visited Iran on February 6-7, 2007. Discussions were held on bilateral and regional issues. EAM conveyed to the Iranian side that India greatly values its relations with Iran and views mutual cooperation as critical to the future security and prosperity of the region. It was emphasised that Iran was important for India's energy security and for transit to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The two sides discussed the supply of gas through the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project.

8. On the nuclear issue, EAM emphasized that the issue should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiations. The two sides also discussed the situation in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and other issues.

Maldives

9. EAM visited Maldives on January 10, 2007. During his visit, EAM called on President of Maldives and handed over to him an invitation letter, inviting him for the SAARC Summit to be hosted by India in New Delhi. EAM's meetings with the Maldivian dignitaries were utilized to review the state of bilateral relations and enhance economic and technical cooperation.

Myanmar

10. EAM paid an official visit to Myanmar from January 19-21, 2007. During his meeting with the Myanmar leadership, the full range of bilateral relations including development of the India-Myanmar border region through various infrastructure projects, measures for enhancing bilateral trade, cultural and educational exchanges, and co-operation in the field of energy sector were discussed.

Nepal

11. EAM visited Kathmandu on December 17, 2006. He called on the Nepalese Prime Minister and handed over to him an invitation from PM to attend the 14th SAARC Summit being held in New Delhi. EAM also met Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli.

12. The visit provided an opportunity to discuss the progress and possibilities in examining the close and multidimensional ties between India and Nepal. It was stressed that at this crucial time in Nepal's history, India remains steadfast, as ever, to extend all possible assistance to Nepal in accordance with the priorities and wishes of the Government and people of Nepal.

Pakistan

13. EAM visited Pakistan on January 13-14, 2007 to convey Prime Minister's invitation to Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to attend the 14th SAARC Summit being held in New Delhi. EAM called on the President, Prime Minister and met Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

14. EAM and FM of Pakistan agreed

(i) to establish a committee on prisoners comprising retired judges of the superior judiciary to visit jails in the two countries and propose steps to ensure humane treatment and expedite release of prisoners who have completed their prison terms;

(ii) to expedite the liberalization of the visa regime;

(iii) on Siachen, it was decided that the officials will meet at an early date to address the issue;

(iv) procedures will be worked out to facilitate movement of diplomats to Noida and Gurgaon in India and Taxila and Hasan Abdal in Pakistan;

(v) first meeting of the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism will take place before the end of March 2007

(vi) the joint survey of Sir Creek will begin on 15th January 2007, officials concerned will be directed to expedite their work on Sir Creek; and

(vii) the Fourth Round of Composite Dialogue would be held from March 13-14 2007.

Philippines

15. EAM visited Cebu in Philippines on January 11-12, 2007 to participate in the India -ASEAN Ministerial meeting and the East Asia Meeting of Foreign Ministers. During his visit, the deliberations focused on strengthening India's Dialogue Partnership with the ASEAN and regional cooperation.

Sri Lanka

16. EAM visited Colombo on January 9-10, 2007 to extend the SAARC Summit invitation to the President of Sri Lanka. EAM called on President, Prime Minister and met Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka. The two sides discussed issues of mutual interest, including the peace process in Sri Lanka and bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, culture and people-to-people contacts.